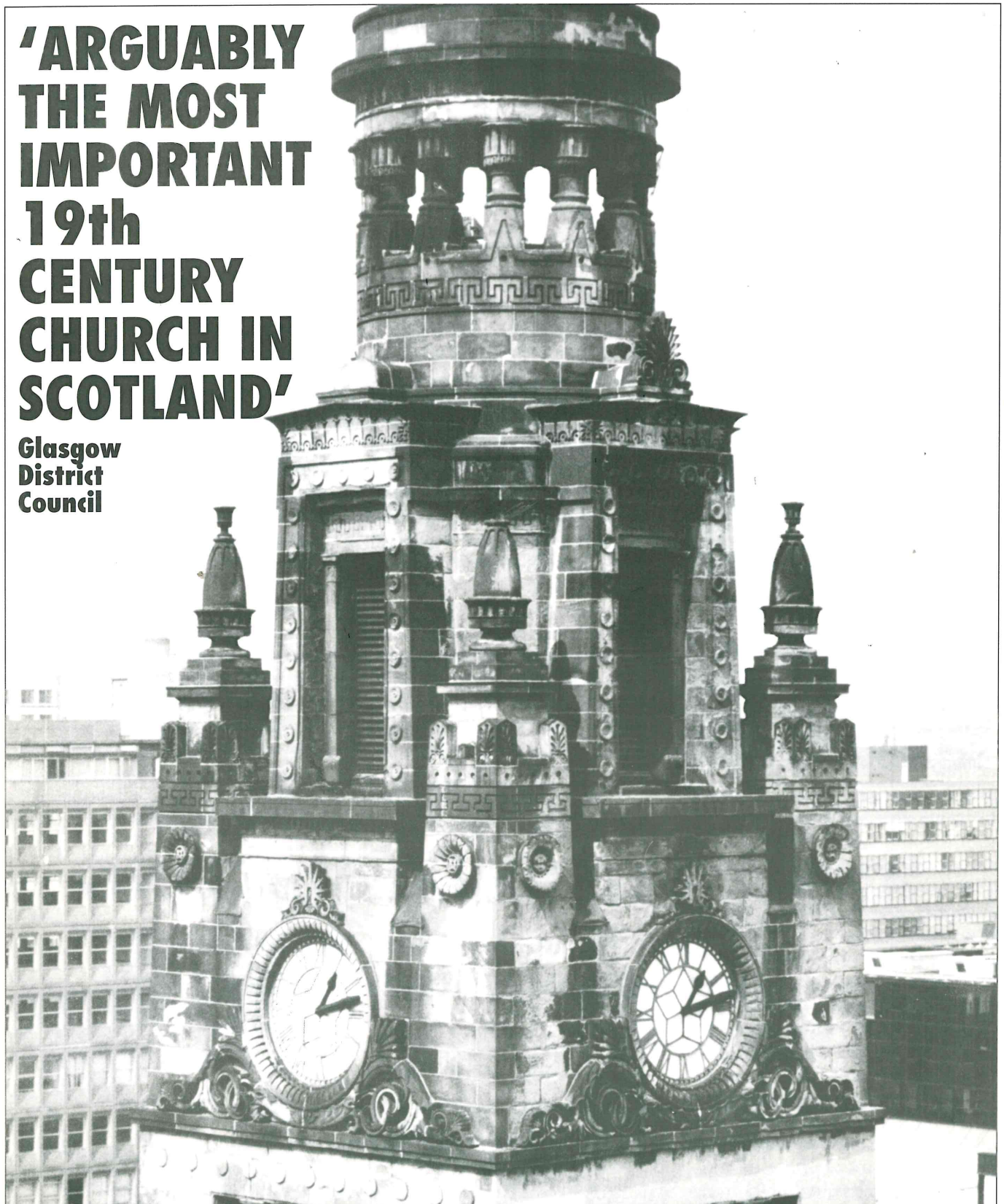


The Alexander Thomson Society NEWSLETTER

Nº 8 OCTOBER 1993

**'ARGUABLY
THE MOST
IMPORTANT
19th
CENTURY
CHURCH IN
SCOTLAND'**

**Glasgow
District
Council**



IT'S AGM TIME! 17th NOVEMBER

THE MARQUESS OF BUTE

Photo: The Herald



It is with the greatest regret that we have to report the death of one of our Patrons, John, Sixth Marquess of Bute.

Lord Bute was, of course, a tower of strength in so many areas of the architectural life of Scotland. He had long cared about Glasgow and, therefore, about the surviving work of Alexander Thomson.

His great forbear, the third Marquess, of course preferred Gothic and Byzantine to Greek and commissioned Burges and Rowand Anderson rather than Thomson, alas, but John Bute had wider sympathies than his great-grandfather, and was pleased that the Isle of Bute can boast a Thomson villa [Tor House, Rothesay]. He therefore gave strong encouragement to this society and willingly agreed to become our patron. Indeed, I don't think I would have dared propose the formation of an Alexander Thomson Society if I had not secured his support. He wrote to me, on 23rd March, 1991: "I am delighted that you are indeed proceeding with the formation of a 'Greek' Thomson society... I should be pleased to become associated with the society in some way and to give it such support as I can."

Nor was John Bute just a figure-head, or writing-paper Patron, for he

encouraged our aims with the considerable influence he could exercise. Holmwood was a cause dear to his heart. A week before our launch on 9th April, 1991, he wrote to me to "commend the house's cause to you as being of outstanding importance." As a former Chairman, I think he was instrumental in persuading the National Trust for Scotland that Holmwood was a property which ought to be acquired and, in his quiet, effective way, he worked behind the scenes to secure this end.

Lord Bute felt strongly that the owners of Holmwood should fulfil their responsibilities to a wider community and he proposed making a personal visit to the Middlesex headquarters of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions to promote constructive negotiations. As he was Scotland's leading Roman Catholic layman, this was a most welcome proposal but, unfortunately, his final terrible illness, so very bravely born, prevented him from carrying out this plan.

Lord Bute's death leaves a terrible void in the cultural life of Scotland. The Alexander Thomson Society will miss him greatly and I salute his memory, both as a friend and as a man who cared so deeply about Scotland's architecture.

Gavin Stamp

THE ALEXANDER THOMSON SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This year's A.G.M. takes place on
WEDNESDAY, 17th NOVEMBER
in

Procurators' Hall

(corner of West Regent Street and St George's Place/Nelson Mandela Place)

at 6.00 for 6.30 p.m.

Followed by Fiona Sinclair on 'The Life and Work of Charles Wilson'

Admission is free. A small charge will be made for wine and refreshments.

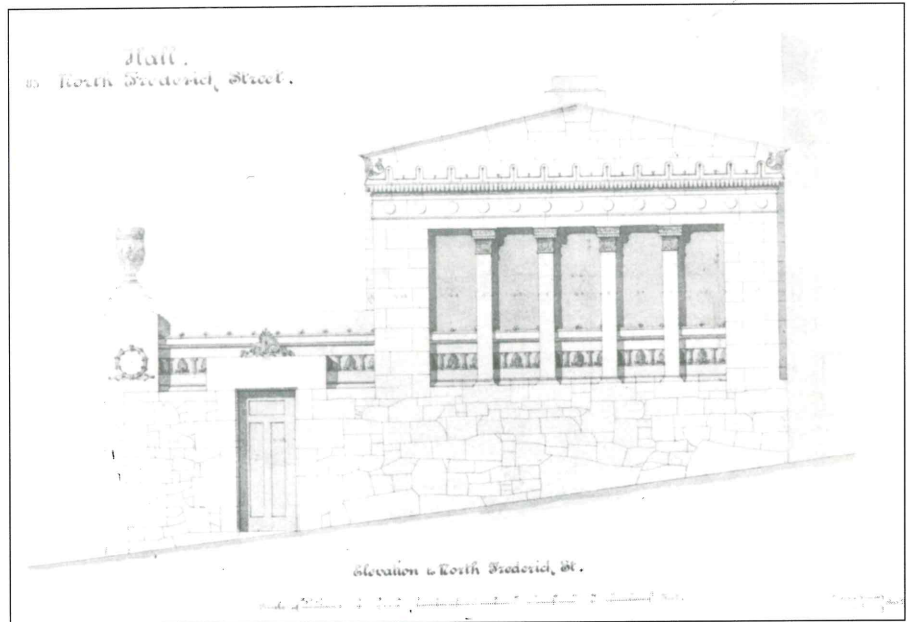
A MASTERPIECE REVEALED

An early but much admired lost building by Thomson was the studio for the sculptor John Mossman on the corner of Cathedral Street and North Frederick Street. Thomas Gildard, writing in 1888, tells us that:

"The studio which Mr Thomson designed for his old and intimate friend, Mr Mossman, was one of his first works that attracted the particular attention of other architects as art-critics. In quality of composition, if not also of detail, I do not know if, in any of his subsequent works, he has surpassed it. The site, the corner of two streets, one of which is level, the other having a considerable inclination, is taken advantage of with consummate skill as regards both artistic design and utility..."

Thomson's drawings for this studio are lost while the building itself disappeared long ago—probably in the 1890s—without, apparently, any record surviving of it (although the photograph of figures being carved by Mossman's workmen for James Sellars' St Andrew's Halls probably shows the interior). But now a drawing has turned up to reveal what a brilliant little building it was.

Looking through the collection in the Glasgow School of Art, your Chairman came across two measured drawings of a 'Hall' at 83 North Frederick Street by Jas. B. Fulton,



dated 1893. There can be no doubt of the authorship of the original building: the cyclopean masonry, the brilliant integration of a horizontal honeysuckle-and-lotus frieze with an abstracted portico, the block cornice over the door, all correspond with Gildard's description if not self-evidently by Thomson except for the noble urn on the corner, which he did not mention. And 83 North Frederick Street was the address of the brothers Mossman in the Post Office Directory until the 1870s.

Unfortunately, no drawing by Fulton of the Cathedral Street elevation seems to have survived. Fulton's

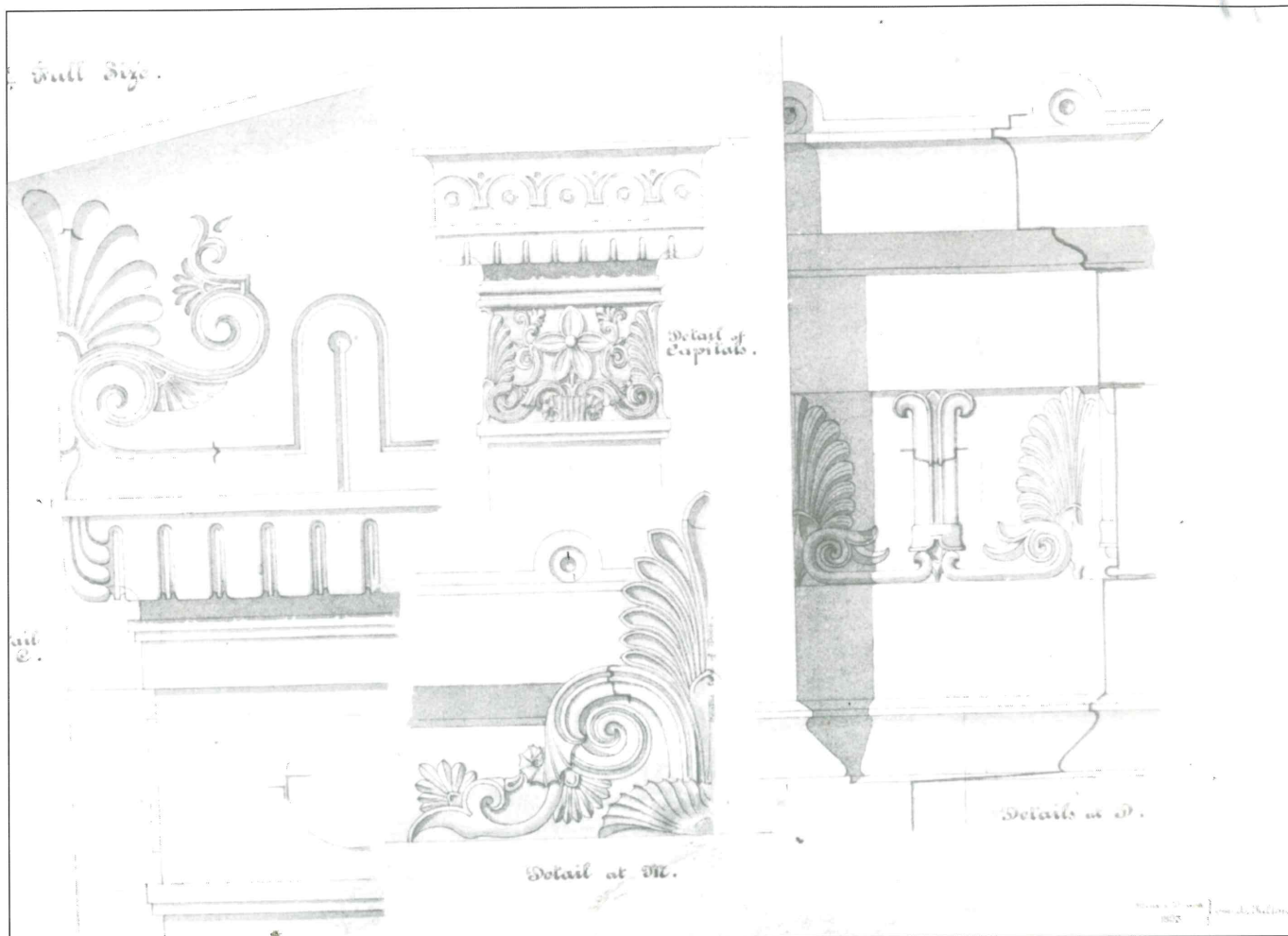
side elevation makes it clear that a low range ran along the street with a higher block set further back, but for its appearance we must still rely on Gildard: "...Along the level street the walling is of cyclopean masonry, pierced by a doorway which, from its sill being on a level with the surface within, serves the purpose of a 'bank' loading, and on each side of it, by three openings, having broad dwarf pilasters between them, also on each side of the doorway, the extreme piers being of cyclopean work, part of the general walling. On the inclined street..."—but now, at long last, we know what this elevation actually looked like.

But mysteries remain. The 1st edition 1:500 Ordnance Survey map, surveyed in 1858, shows a 'Sculptor's Yard' which corresponds in size with Fulton's elevation (*see left*), but it shows only the lower part covered and most of the upper part open, the two separated by (iron?) columns. Perhaps this was drawn before Thomson's structure was completed. But the 2nd edition map, surveyed in 1893, shows a confusing jumble of buildings (*see over*): this does not seem to relate to Fulton's drawing, and the red sandstone building now on the site (and occupied by the

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A MASTERPIECE REVEALED

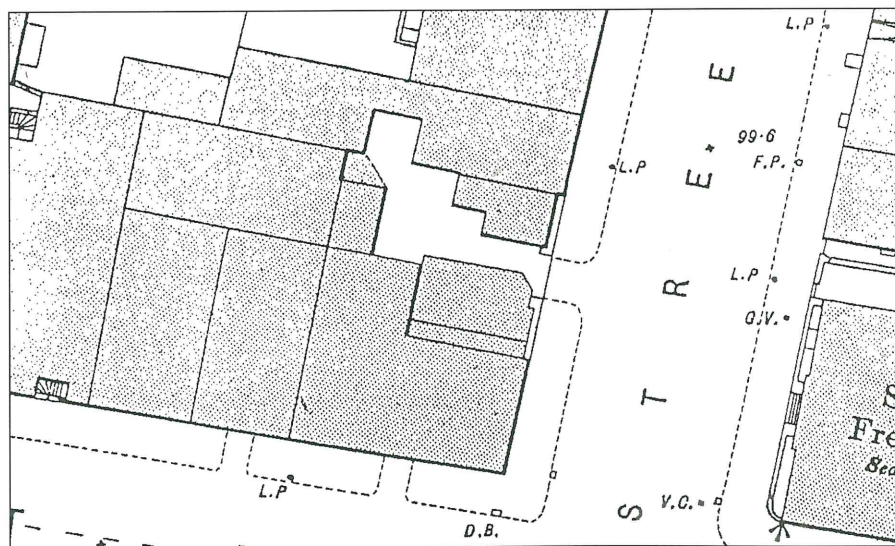


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Congregational Union of Scotland (the former Apostolic Church) came two years later (by Colin Menzies). This is puzzling; but Fulton's measured drawing seems totally accurate.

James Fulton, a product of the Glasgow School of Architecture, was a brilliant draughtsman who later carried off both the Tite Prize and the Soane Medallion, and who, having taught at the Brixton School of Building, eventually returned to the Glasgow School as director of studies before dying, prematurely, in 1922. His drawings of Mossman's studio bear a mysterious embossed stamp, 'E.S.K.': Exhibited at South Kensington?

Sculptor Alexander Stoddart writes on Thomson and Mossman in the book of essays on Thomson edited by Gavin Stamp and Sam McKinstry to be published by Edinburgh University Press during 1994.



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THIS YEAR'S A.G.M. takes place at 6.00 for 6.30 p.m. on **Wednesday, 17th November**, in **Procurators' Hall** on the corner of West Regent Street and St George's Place. This fine Italianate building was designed by Thomson's friend and contemporary, Charles Wilson, and built in 1854-56. We are most grateful to the Royal Faculty of Procurators for allowing us to see and

use the splendid interiors.

Afterwards, Fiona Sinclair will talk about the life and work of Charles Wilson.

Last year's A.G.M. was disappointingly attended. We hope many more members will come this year—if only to see the architecture. Admission is free, although we must make a modest charge for wine and refreshments.

CASES

HOLMWOOD

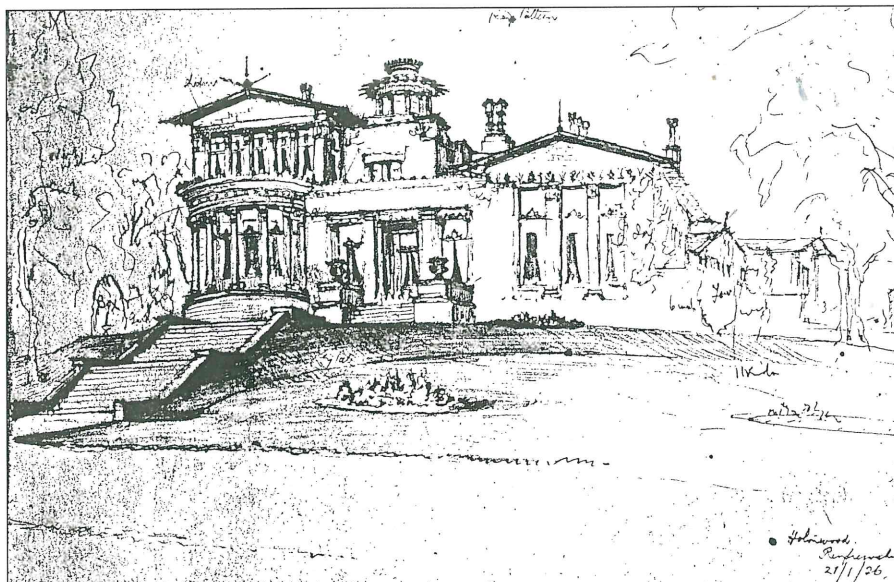
There is little to report, which in itself may seem worrying. The campaign to save Thomson's finest villa and bring it into the public realm is becoming an alarmingly protracted saga. We are therefore most grateful to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions for promising to continue to occupy Holmwood until its future is finally settled.

The Compulsory Purchase Order made by the City of Glasgow District Council was published on 24th August. Meanwhile, Strathclyde Regional Council has accepted that it has obligations over the condition of the property as a former lessee. As anticipated in our last *Newsletter*, we therefore have the potentially absurd situation whereby one public authority is liable for the cost of repairs demanded by another authority. What both authorities hope, however, is that an agreement can be reached between all parties whereby the property—and the obligation to effect proper repairs—is transferred to the National Trust for Scotland.

Negotiations are therefore taking place between the the City of Glasgow, Strathclyde Regional Council and the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions to try and resolve the deadlock and achieve a satisfactory solution. We are not party to these and, at present, can only hope that good progress is being made. Meanwhile, despite two outright and unequivocal planning refusals, the incorrigible developer, Messrs Carvill, has now submitted yet another application, this time to convert the existing Holmwood buildings into a nursing home. We shall naturally oppose this vigorously.

ST VINCENT STREET CHURCH

After all our anxieties about the manner in which the stonework has been damaged recently in the course of effecting 'repairs', we are very pleased to report that the final draft of the long-awaited survey report and restoration proposals for the St



Holmwood, as drawn by the artist James Macintyre on 27th January, 1926. With the kind permission of Barclay Lennie Fine Art Ltd.

Vincent Street Porch has been sent to us and was discussed at a meeting of the Property Review Team on 12th October.

This report has been prepared by the Department of Architecture and Related Services in co-operation with the Estates Department. We are delighted to read it, especially as the document begins by acknowledging that, "This Grade A Listed Church is arguably the most important 19th Century Church in Scotland being of national and international interest... The property however now requires extensive renovation work to be carried out."

It is also a relief to read that, "The general structural condition of the church is sound" but, as is painfully evident, much of the external stonework is in very poor condition. A very large amount of new stone

indentation will be required, and the unsightly and unsatisfactory cement repairs carried out in the late 1960s will also have to be replaced. The total estimated cost for all repairs and stone restoration, together with internal redecoration and the installation of new building services, is £4,478,000.

There is too much detail in the report to summarise here, but we are pleased to read that it is proposed to reinstate the lightwell adjacent to the St Vincent Street main entrance, involving the "removal of temporary asphalt area" about which we protested vigorously last year. We are also relieved that initial discussions have taken place with Historic Scotland, which, apparently, would only consider grant assistance for a full restoration scheme and which is "totally opposed to stonecleaning at present"—although its view might change if a safe technique can be agreed upon.

Stonecleaning is, of course, a vexed matter and, as the stonework of the St Vincent Street Church presents appalling problems, we are very glad that this problem is being approached with responsible caution. As we have said before, far too many buildings in Glasgow have been irreparably damaged by ill-considered and poorly executed chemical cleaning—and by other methods. Indeed, we were pleased to find an admirable summary of the present state of opinion and research on stone cleaning concluding this report—only to find an acknowledge-

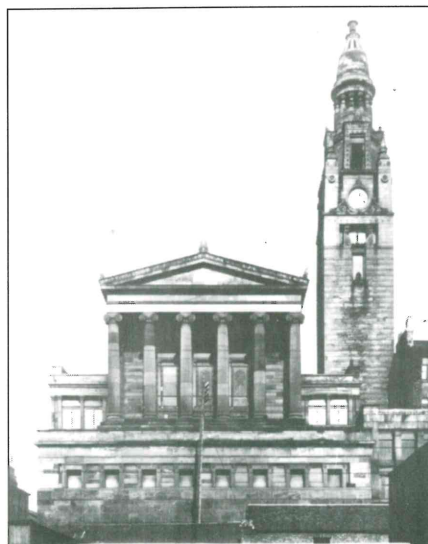


Photo: RCAHMS

ment given to Jane Porter's article on the subject in issue N° 6 of this *Newsletter*.

We thoroughly welcome this report and look forward to it leading to progress on restoring Thomson's only complete surviving church.

CALEDONIA ROAD CHURCH

Many members will have noticed an ominous sag in the eaves of the roof on the top of the campanile of the Caledonia Road Church back in August. As might be supposed after years of neglect, this timber roof had become rotten and was partly collapsing. At the end of August, scaffolding was erected and emergency repairs carried out by the City of Glasgow, which involved taking down the roof and leaving the stone cross rising high above the tower on its stone base.

David Martin of the Planning Department ascended the scaffolding and reported to us that the stonework of the tower is in "surprisingly good condition" although there is a crack across the cross which is reinforced with a (now rusted) iron strap. Elsewhere, the surviving roofs are in very poor condition and will be removed or replaced.

At present, there are no plans to replace the tower roof. This is worrying as the stonework will now be much more exposed to the weather and may therefore deteriorate more quickly. However, the time is surely approaching—with the commencement of the Crown Street Regeneration Project—when the shell of the Caledonia Road Church ought to be roofed to perform a useful communal function—although the fatuous road plan imposed on the area by Strathclyde District Council militates against a proper solution being found to the future of the ruin. We believe that the least we can expect is the re-instatement of the complete external walls. It would also be desirable to build on the waste ground immediately to the north as the Caledonia Road was never intended to be a free-standing monument—it was integrated into the urban grain by contiguous tenement blocks designed by Thomson himself.



With the appointment of a new Director of Planning, we believe that the time has come to have serious and constructive discussions about the future of this most noble, and shameful ruin.

N° 4, GREAT WESTERN TERRACE

Good news. Glasgow City Council has agreed, in principle, to sell N° 4 Great Western Terrace for a nominal sum to Messrs Classical House, the firm responsible for the Italian Centre and the restoration and conversion of the Neilson Institution in Paisley. The plan, by architects Page & Park, is to restore the interior of Thomson's magnificent interior—the

only one in Great Western Terrace which remains undivided and keep it as a single dwelling while creating separate flats in the basement. We welcome this, and only hope that the lamps and other fittings which 'disappeared' in recent years before the Council acquired the house by compulsory purchase can be recovered or restored.

The Residents of N° 4

At the time of the 1871 Census, N° 4—with its 17 rooms—was occupied by James W. Macgregor, a 53 year-old Retired Tobacco Merchant, together with his wife, niece and three servants. Those who came on our most successful tour of the whole terrace in June, arranged by Dr Donald Barran, will be interested to know that, in 1871, N° 1 was occupied by

Daniel McFarlane, a 52 year-old Distiller, with his wife, eight children and seven servants—after all he had 26 rooms to fill—while Nos 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 were uninhabited.

Mr C. D. R. McKellar kindly tells that the earliest entries for the Great Western Terrace houses in the Post Office Directories are as follows: No 1, 1870-71, Daniel McFarlane; No 2, 1873-74, James D. Marwick—who was Town Clerk and Secretary of the City Improvement Trust; No 3, 1873-74, David Smith; No 4, 1870-71, James Walker McGregor; No 5, 1872-73, John E. Young; No 6, 1871-72, David McKinlay; No 7, 1872-73, Robert Blackie—the publisher of *Villa & Cottage Architecture* who also employed Thomson to design his printing works in Stanhope Street; No 8, 1872-73, Robert Hutcheson; No 9, 1877-78, William Shaw; No 10, 1876-77, James L. Mitchell; and No 11, 1877-78, Robert Young.

At the time of the 1871 Census, the rest of the terrace was presumably not then built. By 1881, it was, having been completed by J. J. Burnet using, we presume, Thomson's designs. On Census night, Daniel MacFarlane, now a 'Distillery Shareholder', was still at No 1; No 2 was again unoccupied; No 3 now lived in by F. B. Lecky, 59, an Irish-born Linen Merchant; and No 4 was still the home of James W. MacGregor. No 5 was occupied by Jessie Young, 75, the widow of John Young, while at No 6 only three servants were at home that night. At No 7, James R. Blackie, the son of the publisher, was at home; No 8—the future home of William Burrell—was occupied by Robert Hutchison, 57, a Retired Dry Goods Merchant; No 9 by William Shaw, 61, a Calico Printer (employing 50 men & 40 girls); No 10 by James Mitchell, a 45 year-old Sugar and Timber Broker, and No 11 by Robert Young, 58, a General Merchant.

As we saw on 17th June, several of the houses were altered around the turn of the century and all—apart from No 4—have been subdivided. Nevertheless, more of the original Thomson interiors survive than we expected and the entrance hall of No 7—Blackie's house—is particularly interesting, as might be expected.

More on Watson Street/Bell Street

RONALD MCFADZEAN responds to the discovery of a late Thomson design.

For me, the really exiting item in the June *Newsletter* was the discovery by Gavin Stamp of a drawing of one of the elevations of the Watson Street/Bell Street warehouses. These buildings were completely unknown to me, so they come as a most pleasant surprise.

Looking at the drawing I had no doubt that it was a genuine Thomson design—almost everything looked correct—the proportions, the scale, the relationship of elements to each other and so on. My only reservation concerned the very shallow pediments and the end bays: these would have looked weak and insignificant from street level. The first and second floors with their giant order are much better proportioned versions of the equivalent storeys to be found at Thomson's tenement at 36–38 Gorbals Street (1874). The top storey is, as far as I know, unique in Thomson's oeuvre, but looks most convincing.

Following Thomson's death in March 1875, the office would be in some confusion until matters were resolved. On 6th July 1876 his partner, Robert Turnbull, made a request to the Thomson Trustees for a new partner and stated that:

'from his lack of indoor experience and the attention required by the outdoor department it had become necessary in the interest of the business that he should find a partner of sufficient knowledge and experience to take up the department to which

the late Mr Thomson had attended.'

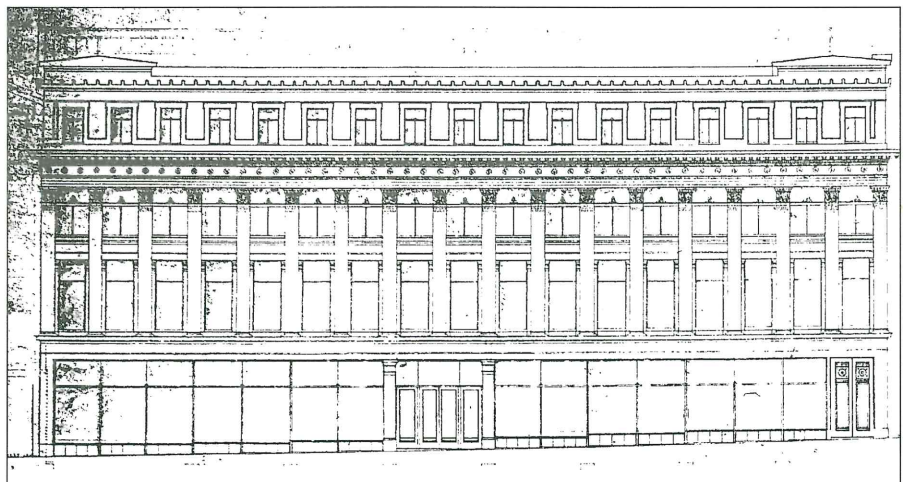
From the surviving evidence, I have always understood that Turnbull was not a designer, but controlled the building contracts and supervised construction, while Thomson did the design work. Consequently, the 1876 warehouse could not have been designed by Turnbull, and his new partner David Thomson (no relation to Alexander) arrived on the scene too late.

I was able to visit the warehouses a few weeks ago and, apart from my initial dismay at their awful condition, I found them to be much better than the drawing would suggest. The masonry on the main street facades, in spite of a heavy coating of grime, appears to be in surprisingly good shape. The shallow end pediments which appear on the drawing have been abandoned and Thomson's favourite Thrassyliens entablature motif has been substituted. The decorative swags, however, do look a bit unexpected.

I am certain that these warehouses were constructed in accordance with a late Alexander Thomson design and, although a few changes may have been made by Robert Turnbull, they are of a minor nature and don't detract from the grandeur of Thomson's original conception.

What is their future? Not much, I should imagine. They stand empty and deserted and have clearly outlived their day. But nearby, in

Continued on Page 12



GREEK T IN LONDON

Gavin Stamp uncovers Thomson's work in some surprising places.

Thomson's talents, notoriously, were excluded from Edinburgh and he failed to win the competitions for the South Kensington Museum and the Albert Memorial. Yet there are, in fact, structures designed by Thomson to be found in, of all places, far away South-East London.

Writing about Egyptian Halls in his article on 'The Work of Alexander Thomson' in *The Builder* for 11th April, 1924, the Scottish architect Malcolm Stark noted that, 'Placed at regular intervals on the kerb of the pavement in front of it were lamp standards of remarkable design, very original and aggressive, and of great girth. Some time ago, practical considerations urged on the part of the City Corporation led to their removal; only one is now known to exist, where it serves as a lamp stan-



Above: Thomson lamp-standard at New Cross Road.

Below left: Detail of Clifton Rise standard.

Above right: Egyptian Halls, Union Street, with lamp-standards intact.

Below right: Detail of New Cross Road standard.

Photos: Gavin Stamp

dard at the converging point of three thoroughfares at New Cross-gate, London."

In fact, as Roger Guthrie tells me, they were taken down almost immediately, in 1871, by the city's lighting department, as Thomson had neglected to obtain permission to erect them.

Alerted by this recondite reference, both your Chairman and Secretary separately explored the wastes of South-East London over the Summer to find... not one but two Thomson lamp-standards. One stands above a public convenience at the major road junction formed by New Cross Road and Queen's Road, London S.E.14. But there is a second one a third of a mile to the east, lurking in Clifton Rise just off another triangular road junction where New Cross Road meets Lewisham Way and where there was once another convenience. Both correspond with Stark's description and closely resemble the fat columnar lamp standards sur-

mounted by strange organic tripods supporting lamp globes which are to be seen in the early elevated photograph of Egyptian Halls taken by Thomas Annan—except that, in New Cross Gate, each is raised up on a Thomsonian pedestal.

But are they the originals uprooted from Union Street? This seems unlikely as the tops of the flutes incorporate holes, suggesting that these lamps were gas standards of a type expressly designed to ventilate subterranean lavatories.

Andrew Saint of the London Division of English Heritage kindly informs us that two New Cross Gate public conveniences were erected in





1897 by the sanitary engineer George Jennings of Lambeth Palace Road for Greenwich District Board of Works on behalf of the Vestry of St Paul's Deptford—that is, over thirty years after the pavement of Union Street was cleared of Thomson's splendid obstructions.

As many of Thomson's designs for ironwork were manufactured by at the Saracen Foundry of Walter Macfarlane & Co., who subsequently put the models in the firm's commercial range, the supposition is that these are Macfarlane's castings from an original design by Thomson for Egyptian Halls. This is confirmed by the trademark of the firm being visible on the lamp in Clifton Rise as well as by the presence in the 7th edition of *Macfarlane's Castings* of both an illustration of the column standard and, separately, of the Thomsonian base. Roger Guthrie tells me that this pedestal was actually designed by James Sellars, but as for the columns, Thomson-designed

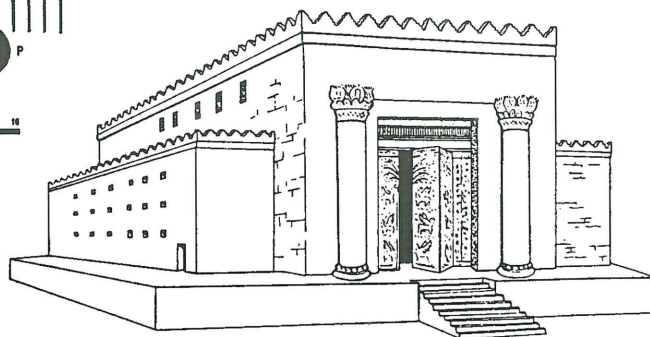
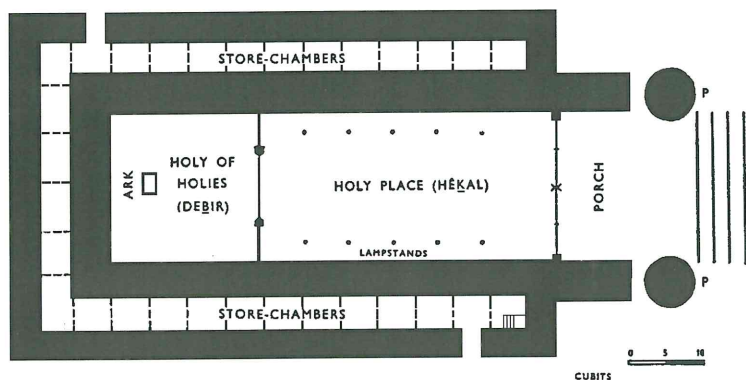
lamp-standards they certainly are, "very original and aggressive".

The standard in Clifton Rise (now Hill) has been grit-blasted, repainted and repositioned by the Borough Engineers Department of Lewisham Council following the closure of the convenience in 1987. The other one is in rather worse condition above a still functioning public lavatory. Surely one, or both, ought to be listed: London perhaps deserves a work by Scotland's greatest Victorian architect. More to the point, should not one of these remarkable objects be returned to Glasgow? As far as we are aware, no others survive. It could then be copied so that six can be re-erected in Union Street with planning permission, of course—when Egyptian Halls is properly restored as it deserves.

Gavin Stamp



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE IN ST VINCENT STREET?



SAM MCKINSTRY explodes a myth.

THERE IS a persistent notion abroad that Thomson's design for St Vincent Street United Presbyterian Church owes something to Solomon's Temple. The *RIAS Guide to Glasgow* makes mention of a possible connection, and the idea has a certain mystical appeal. It fits in rather well with the feeling which surfaces in some writers on Thomson that, as a member of a Presbyterian denomination, he would of necessity be thrilled to a kind of 'Presbyterian Judaism', wherein the Christian faith was interpreted through the mists of Old Testament institutions, symbolism and language.

And what about the significance of Solomon's Temple for Freemasonry? A reliable source informs us that Thomson was a Mason. Might this have had something to do with it? In a way, the lack of resolution of the problem surrounding the relationship between the two buildings can even intensify the sense of mystery we associate both with the architect and his superb church.

The purpose of this short article is to examine the problem in the light of the surviving facts. Let us begin by asking where the rumour came from. Its source appears to have been James Fleming's *Historical Sketch of The St Vincent Street United Free Church, Glasgow*, of 1916. In describing the church's architecture, its author dis-

cussed the building's layout. His argument is, that in deciding on the 'classic' style for the church, Thomson was torn between the convention that a Greek temple should be twice as long as it is broad, and the fact that a more or less square plan was necessary for the preacher—the focal point of the church—to be heard. A square format would have given the building "a dumpiness anything but pleasing". Fleming goes on to state that "the solution preferred... was to increase the breadth by the addition of aisles—a method cleverly borrowed from Gothic practice by the architect. The Solomonic Temple appears to have had a similar arrangement."

Observe for the moment that the statement is not attributed to Thomson, and proceed with me to the Old Testament, where Solomon's Temple is described in considerable detail. In 1 Kings 6 (Good News Bible), we read that the building was 27 metres long, 9 metres wide, and 13.5 metres high. A "three storied annexe" was built onto the Temple's back and sides, each storey 2.2 metres at ground level. The reduction in thickness of the walls of each succeeding storey meant that the width of the rooms, 2.2 metres at ground level, increased slightly towards the top, an arrangement chosen to allow the annexes to lean

on the main building's walls without the need for interpenetrating beams, preserving the sanctuary's structural self-sufficiency, presumably for symbolic reasons. The wealth of detail provided in the Biblical account has made conjectural reconstructions easy, and one is illustrated here. Of particular note are the two free-standing bronze columns, with lily-leaf capitals, known as Jachin and Boaz. I am sure readers will agree that if there is a resemblance, it is restricted to the fact that each building has at its heart a box with two side bays, and inside, all similarity evaporates!

The resemblance is so basic that it could have arisen by chance rather than design and, as Fleming implies, it appears just as likely that the St Vincent Street Church layout owes its origin to the Gothic style, where aisles or annexes were expressed on the outside of buildings.

But what about Freemasonry? It has to be recognised that many Victorian architects were Freemasons, and that many new buildings were opened with full masonic honours, so there is no necessary connection. Indeed, Thomson's ideological 'enemies', the Gothic Revivalists, were also Freemasons! As for 'Presbyterian Judaism', this does not bear close examination either. The United

Continued on Page 12

FILM SHOW

ON TUESDAY, 2nd November, at 7.00 p.m. in the First Floor Lecture Theatre in the Mackintosh School of Architecture, 177 Renfrew Street, we are having an architectural film show.

The main attraction is *Greek Thomson*, made by the Scottish Educational Film Association and released in 1967. The commentary was written by the late Fred Selby and this excellent film contains poignant footage of Thomson buildings which have since disappeared, including Queen's Park Terrace, the buildings at Cowcaddens, and Pollok School. Much of the film was shot in 1965 and there are views of the Caledonia Road Church taken shortly before the fire which gutted it.

The trailer is *The Battle of the Styles*, made by Educational Films of Scotland and also released in 1967. This was directed by Louise Annan and deals with the fight in Scotland between Gothic and Classic—in which Thomson was such a prominent protagonist.

Entrance charge: £2 at the door.

FOR SALE

TWO THOMSON houses are presently on the market. The first is 'Craigievar', Laighlands Road, Bothwell. This is a confusing name which actually refers to the converted ground floor of the detached Thomson villa of 1855 originally called 'Greenbank' which was discussed and illustrated by McFadzean (p.47). Details from Messrs Slater Hogg & Howison.

The second is N° 6 Moray Place: one of the central houses in the terrace which Thomson both designed and lived in, and which Henry-Russell Hitchcock considered to be, "with little question the finest of all 19th century terraces, both in design and execution, and one of the world's most superb pieces of design based on Greek precedent". Thomson moved into N° 1 in 1861; at the time of the 1871 Census, N° 6 was occupied by John A. Ferguson, a Glasgow-born Sock Manufacturer who employed 51 men & six boys. Further details from Mr Donald McIvor at N° 6 Moray Place.

The Weft of Art in the Warp of City Life

THAT WAS the title of a lecture delivered by Francis (Fra) Newbery, then Headmaster of the Glasgow School of Art, to the Glasgow and West of Scotland Teachers' Guild around 1897.

In terms of architecture and design, most readers will invariably associate Newbery's name with his effective and consistent promotion of Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Indeed it was in 1897 that the first stage of the new School of Art building was started.

In this particular lecture Newbery spoke of the fabric of the city being in the process of transformation, and of the great opportunities this afforded to enrich the city with true works of art. We should treat our architects as artists, not mere builders, he contended, and pointed to a model for all to emulate:

'If he (Newbery) were asked to name a single piece of work in

Glasgow as being simple, dignified and artistic, he would point to Great Western Terrace built by Greek Thomson. There was no feature that could be taken away, no feature that could be added. Thought, architectural instinct, and artistic insight succeeded in designing a terrace which was one of the glories of Glasgow.'

Almost a century later, with Glasgow in the throes of bidding to become the British centre for Architecture and Design in 1999, the sentiments of Newbery's lecture still seem entirely appropriate. We might reflect on what has been done in the intervening period either to create new buildings which rise above the mediocre, or to conserve what Newbery considered "one of the glories of Glasgow."

Juliet Kinchin

Source: Newbery Presscutting Book, Mitchell Library, p.76



Balustrade, N° 3 Great Western Terrace. Photo: Gavin Stamp

MORE ON ARRANVIEW

ROB CLOSE adds to the Arranview question.

That Arranview was designed for Gavin Black Motherwell is undeniable. A date of 1867–1868 is confirmed by entries in the Sasine Register for Lanarkshire. Sasine Minute 3819 for 1868 records a Disposition by Patrick Rankin of Auchingray (residing at Otter House, Kilfinan, Argyll) to Gavin Black Motherwell and his wife Jeanie Bell Mathieson or Motherwell of “119 Poles 121/4 Yards of ground on the north side of the road or avenue from Commonhead Street to Thrush Cottage, being part of the lands of Mavisbank in the parish of New or East Monklands”. The minute was registered in December 1868, the deed of sasine itself having been carried out on 28th September 1868. My experience of such dispositions suggests to me that agreement between feu superior and feuar had been reached earlier and that the formal legal transfer of ownership would only follow on once the house was under construction. A construction date of summer 1868 would

therefore seem likely.

Motherwell's name appears frequently in the Sasine Minutes: he was a partner in Rankin & Motherwell, writers, Airdrie; his partner was John Rankin, who may be related to Patrick Rankin of Auchingray, the feu superior. Patrick Rankin's father was another Airdrie writer, James Thomson Rankin.

The next minute, no 3820 of 1868 records a Bond for £900 that Motherwell secured against the Arranview property. The bond was with James Thomson, architect, Airdrie. The inference is that Thomson had lent Motherwell the money to buy the land and build the house.

Turning to the full Sasine (Scottish Record Office RS3/3693 folios 183-), we find a fuller description of the piece of ground. It is bounded on the East, partly by the feu of John Eddie, coalmaster (58' 3") and partly by unfeud land (270' 9"); South, by road to Thrush Cottage (111' 6"); West, by feu of John Robertson, coalmaster (253' 2"); and North, by old road leading along the north boundary of lands of Mavisbank (117' 6")

All these measurements are “conform to plan thereof made out by James Thomson architect and measurer in Airdrie”. My experience would suggest that the feu plan is usually prepared by the feu superior, often based on a feuing plan for a particular area of ground. I looked, for comparison, for Eddie's feu, which was granted by Rankin in 1862 (Minute 1579 of 1862). The full sasine (SRO RS42/242 ff168-) again gives a fuller description and boundaries; these are “all conform to measurement and plan thereof made out by Robert Baird, architect and measurer, Airdrie”.

I'm not sure what all that says: it certainly doesn't clarify very much. Clearly, Motherwell was financially connected with James Thomson over Arranview, while Thomson prepared the original feu plan. If he did so for the superior, Rankin, we have to wonder why he had changed from using Baird 5–6 years previously: Baird was, I think, still alive in 1868.

Setting aside the factual evidence, Arranview seems immeasurably better than anything else known to be by James Thomson.

Solomon's Temple?

Presbyterians were the most liberal among Presbyterians, the Established Church included, sending their young ministers to Germany, where they readily imbibed the philosophising theology of Neander, Tholuck and other disciples of Schleiermacher.

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As you will gather, scepticism is therefore called for. However, I will conclude with the words of Thomson, who stated in a discussion of the functional approach to architecture in one of his lectures, that the design of Solomon's Temple “was not controlled by any utilitarian consideration”.

It seems likely, therefore, that Thomson would solve his functional problem, that of acoustics, by invoking the sacred design. At the same time, this quotation draws us near to the heart of Thomson's aims. He is above all else concerned to elevate our minds up to the Divine, just as the Temple's architect did and, at St Vincent Street, that is all apparent. Here, surely, is the most important and indisputable point of connection.

WATSON STREET/BELL STREET

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Ingram Street, an old facade is being retained intact while a new building is erected behind it. If we can do this for a relatively mundane facade, surely we can do the same for at least one of these splendid Thomson warehouses?

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